

Singapore Management University Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University

Research Collection School of Social Sciences

School of Social Sciences

7-2018

Assessing student learning in sport event management through reflective practice: Measure of success in co-curricular learning in higher education

Paulin Tay STRAUGHAN

Singapore Management University, paulints@smu.edu.sg

Wan Ying (Zheng Wanying) TAY

Singapore Management University, wytay@smu.edu.sg

Eng Kee Eric SONG

Singapore Management University, ericsong@smu.edu.sg

Loon Beng Angela KOH

Singapore Management University, angelakoh@smu.edu.sg

Follow this and additional works at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Citation

STRAUGHAN, Paulin Tay; TAY, Wan Ying (Zheng Wanying); SONG, Eng Kee Eric; and KOH, Loon Beng Angela, "Assessing student learning in sport event management through reflective practice: Measure of success in co-curricular learning in higher education" (2018). *Research Collection School of Social Sciences*. Paper 2706.

https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research/2706

Available at: https://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/sooss_research/2706

This Conference Proceeding Article is brought to you for free and open access by the School of Social Sciences at Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Collection School of Social Sciences by an authorized administrator of Institutional Knowledge at Singapore Management University. For more information, please email libIR@smu.edu.sg.



Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia Inc

Research and Development in Higher Education: **[Re] Valuing Higher Education**

Volume 41

Refereed papers from the
41st HERDSA Annual International Conference

2-5 July 2018
Convention Centre, Adelaide, Australia

Straughan, P. T., Tay, W, Song, E & Koh-Tan, A. (2018). Assessing Student Learning in Sport Event Management through Reflective Practice: Measures of Success in Co-curricular Learning in Higher Education. In D. Wache and D. Houston (Eds.), *Research and Development in Higher Education: (Re)Valuing Higher Education*, 41 (pp 123 - 142). Adelaide, Australia, 2-5 July 2018.

Published 2018 by the
Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia, Inc
PO Box 6106, Hammondville, NSW 2214, Australia
www.hersda.org.au

ISSN 1441 001X
ISBN 978-0-908557-96-7

This research paper was reviewed using a double blind peer review process that meets DIISR requirements. Two reviewers were appointed on the basis of their independence and they reviewed the full paper devoid of the authors' names and institutions in order to ensure objectivity and anonymity. Papers were reviewed according to specified criteria, including relevance to the conference theme and audience, soundness of the research methods and critical analysis, originality and contribution to scholarship, and clear and coherent presentation of the argument. Following review and acceptance, this full paper was presented at the international conference.

Copyright © 2018 HERDSA and the authors. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of research or private study, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright, Designs and Patent Act, 2005, this publication may only be reproduced, stored or transmitted, in any form or by any means, with the prior permission in writing of the publishers, or in the case of reprographic reproduction in accordance with the terms and licenses issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside those terms should be sent to the publishers at the address above.

Assessing Student Learning in Sport Event Management through Reflective Practice: Measures of Success in Co-curricular Learning in Higher Education

Paulin T. Straughan

Singapore Management University, Singapore, 50 Stamford Road, Singapore
178899
paulints@smu.edu.sg

Wan-Ying Tay

Singapore Management University, Singapore, 50 Stamford Road, Singapore
178899
wytay@smu.edu.sg

Eric Song

Singapore Management University, Singapore, 50 Stamford Road, Singapore
178899
ericson@smu.edu.sg

Angela Koh-Tan

Singapore Management University, Singapore, 50 Stamford Road, Singapore
178899
angelakoh@smu.edu.sg

Abstract

Co-curricular activities are an integral part of students' holistic education. Yet, assessing experiential learning outcomes in the co-curricular space can sometimes prove to be challenging, given that not all of such learning experiences are designed or structured in a manner similar to academic courses or programmes. Rather, indirect measures of learning such as asking students to reflect on what they have learnt and experienced is often used for rendering visible learning outcomes. Using reflective practice, the *SMU Gravigal 2018*, an international sporting event, provided the learning platform for the 19 committee members of the Singapore Management University (SMU) Climb team. Their reflections were examined using Bradley's Criteria for assessing levels of reflection and then coded based on the P-O-L-C management framework. The framework helped us understand how students learnt from their experiences, the processes of sport event management, including managing logistics, branding, sponsorships and stakeholders. Our analyses of students' reflections and focus group discussion demonstrated heightened awareness and deeper understanding towards personal and team management, systems and processes and socio-emotional skills.

Keywords: reflective practice, experiential learning, learning outcomes, sport event management

Introduction

There has been growing interest to determine the attribution of lifelong learning to co-curricular involvement in higher education institutions (Yang, Schneller and Roche, 2015). Further, there has been increasing attention among university management who are keen to assess co-curricular learning outcomes for several reasons. One, significant human and fiscal resources are invested and return-on-investment is pondered. Two, there has not been a formal and deliberate attempt to evaluate students' learning outside the classroom to guide future strategic planning. Three, the question of whether the co-curricular space can be a unique selling proposition in attracting students and to give the university a competitive advantage has been raised.

While there has been much preoccupation in this area of work, there is limited literature on how pedagogical approaches such as reflective practice can enhance learning and support assessment of co-curricular learning outcomes (e.g. Edwards, 1999; Knowles, Gilbourne, Borrie and Neville, 2001). Specifically, this study seeks to examine if reflective practice can be used to assess student learning in the organisation of a sporting event.

(Re)Valuing Higher Education in Singapore Management University (SMU)

The Singapore Management University (SMU) was established in 1997 and now has 10,000 students. There are six schools, the School of Accountancy, Lee Kong Chian School of Business, School of Economics, School of Information Systems, School of Law and School of Social Sciences in addition to eight Institutes, 18 Centres and six Labs & Initiatives.

The co-curricular space started with the Office of Student Life at the birth of the University. As the University grew, the various functions in the Office of Student Life expanded, branching out into specialised departments and eventually amalgamated under the Office of Dean of Students, with 11 departments of 90 staff in 2018. The 11 departments take care of all student matters outside the faculties and academics, such as community service, internships, exchanges (with international affiliated universities), career services and co-curricular activities (CCAs).

The unique feature of CCAs in SMU is its club structure. There are a total of about 90 student clubs comprising the arts (24), sports (35) and adventure (7), special interest groups (24) and five Constituent Bodies or student councils. Another 30 clubs exist under the purview of the six schools. Hence, an average of about 3,000 students participate in this co-curricular space.

Assessing outcomes in the co-curricular space is a way for SMU to re-value its provision of higher education beyond academics. Learning and success are thus not merely confined and measured only in the classroom. Intuitively, learning that occurs through CCAs and in the co-curricular space are often remembered more clearly after graduation and seemed to be influential in the formative years of working life.

SMU's 'Vision 2025' includes *transformative education*. It is translated in the co-curricular space as the learning and capturing of experiential learning that shapes and enhances student experience beyond the classroom and with meaningful impact. SMU has also re-established its desired Graduate Outcomes which will require succinct indicators of student development. Therefore, the various areas of academic and co-curricular spheres would need to align programmes and initiatives with compatible learning outcomes.

SMU Gravical is an annual climbing event that started for the local climbing community in 2007 with about a hundred participants. It has grown over the years to over 800 participants in the last three editions and even attracted international participation (from the Southeast Asia region, Korea and Japan), sponsorship and media publicity. It has since established itself as

the first climbing event on the local climbing calendar and has also gained entry onto the Asian Climbing calendar. This year's edition included a world-renowned route-setter from Germany, Tobias Diedler and world-class climbers from Japan, Aya Onoe and Rei Sugimoto (2nd in the 2017 Navi World Cup in Mumbai).

The event is organised by SMU Climb Team (club) comprising a student executive committee of 19 members (see Appendix 1 for their roles). However, it is a new committee each year that takes over from the outgoing organising committee and commencing the work with at least a six-month runway. Each new committee will be experiencing for the first time, organising an event of such scale and magnitude, relying partly on documentation handed down from the previous committee. However, while the scope and functions remain largely unchanged, the new committee will have to adapt to ever-changing situational and structural settings.

Through organising the flagship event, students combine technical and expert knowledge of the sport with the application of event management theory in the field. They exhibit learning across cognitive, affective and sensory domains and develop values and competencies through experiential learning. Hence, the equitable learning environment is acknowledged and the relevant opportunities for transformation in the co-curricular sphere recognised.

Against this background, the study attempts to find out if experiential student learning in sport event management can be assessed through reflective practice. Through the reflective questions, students were asked to comment and provide the following: (1) a summary of their roles and the major tasks they attended to; (2) the extent to which their goals/objectives were achieved; (3) what they learned about themselves and others, such as working style and priorities (4) what they felt were their main learning points about sport event management; and (5) what they might have done differently.

Research Strategy

In deciding on the methodology, the contingent factors were (1) the research question; (2) the theoretical background and study context; (3) the nature and size of the population and (4) the practical considerations of conducting the research.

The choice of qualitative methodology rests on the following: (1) the purposive sampling of the population of 19 organising committee members; (2) the nature of reflective practice that lends itself to learning constructed from a personal understanding based on experience and reflection; and (3) the ability to draw deeper data from respondents who have prior knowledge and are synthesising ideas and reframing thinking.

Thus, the research question is "Can reflective practice be used to assess student learning through the organisation of Gravical 2018?"

The instruments used to collect the data included semi-structured questions to guide respondents on their reflections after the event (Appendix 2) and a focus group discussion (Appendix 3). The intention of the guided questions was to offer a structure to help the student's process their event management experiences, examine assumptions and reframe their thinking.

For the focus group discussion, the 19 organising committee members were invited to participate but only six participants were able to turn up. The six did not have prior experience organising an event of this scale, and had worked closely with each other through the different roles. The aim of the focus group discussion was to better understand what they had reflected on, the team dynamics and their learning. The responses of the participants solicited during the focus group discussion would help draw out the nuances.

The first cycle coding method was process coding and next, the constructed categories, codes and descriptions were conceptualised after the four management functions of Planning, Organising, Leading and Controlling (Appendix 4). The 19 reflections and the focus group discussion transcript were coded accordingly with the objective of identifying recurring themes, patterns of behaviour and personal insights and impact.

The researchers shared the same code book and coded individually first on QDA Miner. They then met to ensure inter-coder reliability and consistency by selecting samples of the evaluated reflections according to Bradley's Criteria for Assessing Levels of Reflection (Appendix 5). The differences in interpretation of prose, codes, descriptions and ambiguities in the text were vigorously discussed and a final agreement arrived at. A sample of the segments, codes and descriptions debated and concurred is shown in Appendix 6. The researchers re-coded the reflections to increase reliability.

In line with this framework, the focus group questions were designed to elicit a deeper understanding of the experiences participants went through during the organising and managing of the sporting event. To this end, the questions revolved around planning, organising, leading and controlling. Questions on determining shared goals such as "Can you describe how you, as a group, came to a consensus about the goals/outcomes/successes of the event?" and employing appropriate strategic processes, "What processes, whether communications, organisation design or logistics, would you recommend putting in place for the next committee?" were asked to the group of six participants. The participants headed the Overall (Committee Chairperson), Programming, Marketing, Administration, Sponsorship and Logistics sub-committees.

Literature Review

The experience of organising SMU Gravigal 2018 is the premise for learning. Reflection has been part of the pedagogical framework for experiential learning. Reflective writing or journaling is a significant tool to develop reflective practitioners. However, reflective practice is not easy to conceptualise despite many formulated models. The learning outcomes remain challenging to measure despite manifestations before, during or after the experience. Also, reflective practice may carry connotations of academic or popular writing or concluded with negative inferences due to personal bias and the focus on unpleasant incidents that spark the emotions for reflection.

The literature on reflective practice stemmed from Dewey (1933), Habermas (1973), Mintzberg (1973), Kolb (1976) and Mezirow (1978) where reflection was viewed as a prior condition to learning from experience despite the popular preference for action over reflection. Yet again, some have postulated that Dewey (1933) studied the early philosopher educators such as Plato, Aristotle and Confucius before producing his seminal description of reflective practice as a deliberate cognitive process connecting ideas against a background of culture, values and beliefs. Reflective thought was a process of presupposed complexity and uncertainty before arriving at solutions for situational challenges (Edwards, 1999, p. 67-70).

According to Kolb (1976, p. 21-22), a learner had to undergo a circular process of four distinct but interrelated stages for effective learning to transpire. Learners would need the abilities of – experiencing (Concrete Experience/CE), reflecting (Reflective Observation/RO), thinking (Abstract Conceptualization/AC), and acting (Active Experimentation/AE). In the first stage, learners acquired information by their open involvement in new experiences without bias. Next, learners reflected, organised and examined the experiences from various perspectives. Third, concepts and generalisations were developed to integrate observations into sound theories. Lastly, the theories guided learners in decision-making and problem-solving in new and

complex scenarios. The cycle would repeat with new information re-entering the concrete experience stage.

Later, Schon's (1983) 'reflection-in-action', Argyris' (1999) 'double-loop learning', Eraut's (1995) 'reflection out of action' in the higher education arena were acknowledged as techniques for building knowledge (Rich, 2010, p. 58). In addition, Roth (1989, p. 31-3) stated "reflection must have a substantive basis ... (if not) can result in a mere propagation of ignorance. Reflection presupposes familiarity with a knowledge base (i.e. research, theory, or empirically tested practice) ... provides a basis to compare and contrast, even to test proposed practices ...". The course of inquiry was then central to the reflective practitioner who could undergo a series of 24 processes (Appendix 7) from asking to analysing, evaluating, synthesising and decision-making.

While there had been research linking reflective practice with sport science, sport psychology, sport coaching, training and performance, there was sparse literature on reflective practice in sport management. In an early work, Edwards (1999) explored the potential contribution of reflective practice to the management of sport by focusing on four dimensions: (1) the definition and theoretical traditions of reflection, (2) notions of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action, (3) principles that ought to underpin reflective practice in sport management and (4) methodological reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. He argued that all forms of reflection were beneficial as critical reflection provided unique opportunities to understand practice (Edwards, 1999, p. 67).

Zakus, Mallory and Edwards (2007) extolled professional praxis in sport management and espoused that ethical and critical thinking be infused into curricula from three elements of philosophy - ontology, epistemology and axiology. Instructional methods to enhance critical thinking included journaling, one of seven techniques, where "thoughts and perceptions are transferred onto paper carefully documenting subjective and objective observations, scrutinising alternatives, exploring, critiquing their ideas, and analysing and evaluating experiences". Reflective journaling was thus seen as "a valuable medium to assist sport management educators to teach through questioning and to foster the development of an inquiring mind".

Fleming and Martin (2007, p. 120) described ways reflection could be facilitated in sport co-operative education. As students found the reflective journey challenging, supervision and support to understand purpose were recommended so that effective skills in reflection could be developed to enhance learning and to transfer theory to practice.

In sport coaching, Knowles, Tyler, Gilbourne and Eubank (2006, p. 172-174) found that the written reflection was a critical element of the reflective process. However, reflective practice appeared to be extrinsically influenced by coach status and role responsibility rather than intrinsically motivated professional action. An abridged version of Gibb's (1988) model of reflection was adopted. The two stages, alternatives for action and action planning, were the focus of discussion for demonstrable outcomes and action from the reflection. Despite Gibbs (1988) and the various generic approaches to reflection, a personal model of reflection was advised for further exploration.

In sport psychology, reflective practice was viewed as critical and essential to professional development due to accountability to the client. Anderson, Knowles and Gilbourne (2004, p. 199) and Cropley, Hanton, Miles and Niven (2010, p. 538) found links between the use of reflective practice and the development of professional knowledge and personal effectiveness and hence improved service delivery.

Findings and Discussion

Firstly, data analysis was conducted by all four researchers who added to the reliability of the study. Secondly, the reflections were requested and a focus group held after the event which could have affected the depth of the individual reflections and motivation to be a participant as 'reflection in action' had passed.

Related to their roles, some committee members exhibited perspective thinking at the onset while others realised the importance of the interconnectedness of the various functional areas while performing their roles. They adapted, coped and stringed their individual efforts, overcoming inevitable tensions, conflicts and situational problems that arose during the event organising experience. During the process, they found themselves facing higher and more intensive levels of people management, resource coordination, strategic planning, networking, decision-making, problem-solving, conflict resolution and communication. Specifically, our findings suggest that through reflecting on their experiences prior, during and after the event, helped them in three areas: (1) personal and team management, (2) the need for good systems and processes; and (3) socio-emotional skills. These are further discussed below:

Personal and team management

The use of reflective practice after the event, through individual written reflections and shared views during the focus group discussion, provided evidence of enhanced experiential learning among the organising committee members of SMU Gravical 2018. During the four-day event, it was obvious that within the respective teams, there were frequent dialogues and problem-solving when reacting to pressing issues. However, if there were shared or facilitated reflections across key members of each team each day, it could have helped in self-efficacy and better task understanding (e.g. communications, systems and processes and structure of work).

From the coding of students' reflections and focus group discussion, there were several categories of findings specific to personal and team management that emerged: (1) the need for better communication; (2) good team dynamics and culture; and (3) clear articulation of goals and objectives. These are discussed below.

The need for better communication

Due to the clear demarcation of roles and responsibilities that the committee had, communications played an important part before, during and after the event. They communicated mainly through the social networking platform, *Telegram*. As true of any event management team, the lack of communications could be problematic and affect the event on the day itself. As much as possible, the team demonstrated awareness of keeping relevant parties in the loop of important information, however, there appeared to be a "lack of communication between the upper management and the rest of the organising committees" as reflected by one of the members. This was also echoed by the President who opined that the flow of information could be improved. The Marketing Director felt that "myself and my co-Marketing Director were in our little marketing bubble – we were aware of what we had to do and all, but we weren't sure what others people from other departments were working on". Due to a lack of information and feedback from the other teams, she observed that it affected, on a small scale, the generation and design of the logo, which her sub-team was in charge of.

Good team dynamics and culture

The team worked very well together and this was unanimously expressed both in their reflections as well as during the focus group discussion. This helped with the pre-event planning as well as the actual day organisation. The culture of the team was a nurturing one. As shared by one of the members, “no matter the hierarchy in the organisation, one must be compassionate first towards others and even those under you because you are all working towards the same common goal in the end”. Another member also reflected that she felt being accepted into the group even though she was a novice climber. It was that sense of being and belonging that motivated her towards contributing to the team through being a key personnel of the events committee.

When issues occurred prior to the event, such as the lack of sponsorships, the team was able to rally together to resolve the issue. As the Vice-President (Logistics and Operations) expressed:

“For instance, our President, had connections to the Kinetics team, the route setting team who tirelessly helped to ensure that the SMU Gravical 2018 was a success. Without them, we wouldn’t have possibly had enough tiles... as our main sponsor was not able to meet with our agreement to supply sufficient number of climbing tiles... other factors include having vehicles to host [guests] and to transport items to and fro SMU.”

Additionally, while the team benefitted from having good team dynamics and strong working relationships, the maintenance of such relationships was not easy, especially nearing the event. As shared by the President, while he did not have time to attend to personal issues immediately, especially on the days of the event, he took it upon himself to mend ties or clarify misunderstandings subsequently, bringing about closure for the parties involved.

Clear articulation of goals and objectives

Another code that had a high frequency count was that of goals and objectives. The committee members were able to articulate clearly their goals and objectives, which aligned with the vision and mission of the event, stated explicitly as “a showcase of SMU students’ ability in event management and outreach to the local and international climbing community”. Thus, they understood that they were not organising a one-off event, but rather ensuring that it would continue to be held annually, albeit at different venues and of extensive scale. This was aptly described by the President during the focus group discussion:

“It is very important to have a long-term plan. The President and Vice Presidents are always changing but the long term goal is constant. Three years ago, the EXCO then would not think that Gravigal could be on the international stage. Last year, they told us it was very hard to find sponsors. The school will give less and less money. What they are trying to tell you is that it is a lost event and just do what you can. Such negative thinking is like you just give me a sinking ship and ask me to sail as far as possible and pass it on to the next captain.”

The view was also shared by the Vice-President (Logistics and Operations) who commented, “What they tell us is that Gravigal will die eventually. What we want to tell the next batch is that Gravigal should be bigger and better”. Seemingly, this appeared to be a common, shared vision amongst the students.

A clear vision also seemed to help members understand their goals and objectives. The Director (Sponsorship) shared during the focus group that they should not concentrate on getting one-off sponsorship but to strategise outreach to sponsors who can fund the event on

a long-term basis. This would require them to work on establishing and maintaining good working partnerships with these sponsors.

Systems and Processes

Our examination of the codes revealed that participants tended to reflect more on system processes and organisational design. System processes was of much importance to the President for example. He made it a point to ensure that plenty of contingency planning was made prior to the event. He also stressed that proper handling procedures be addressed to ensure a smoother transition to the incoming organising committee. The Vice-President (Administration) concerned himself with organisation design more. He felt that the focus would help him and his team members achieve clarity in roles differentiation to complete tasks efficiently. Likewise, the other Vice-President (Logistics and Operations) mulled over how the team was working together. On team dynamics for example, while recognising that “no team is perfect, so was ours”, she observed that there were “a significant few key individuals who day and night contributed to the setup, marketing, registration and programmes of the event, making sure that their work was done and the event could run smoothly”.

For the other team members, much was mentioned about ensuring that system processes were in place. The Director (Sponsorship), for example, observed that while different department worked in silos and reported to the main in-charges, things were running in accordance to the general schedule which coincided well with the original plan. When hiccups occurred, they were generally minor and easily fixed. He attributed this to good system processes.

The context (situational) and motivation (personal) are the two main factors that can influence the success or failure of implementing individual or group reflective practice as a learning tool in sport event management. During the pre-event preparation, the reflections revealed communications could have been more effective if they had foreseen the necessity of standard operating procedures or SOPs (for Marketing, Sponsorship, Volunteer Management and Programming) and checklists (for Finances). As contemplated by one of the members:

“If I could do the project again, I would try to involve more people and ensure a better communication channel to prevent problems down the road.....maybe one way to allow everyone to know what each department is doing is to have an announcements channel.”

This suggestion of a better communication channel to ensure effective information flow from one department to another could be helpful for events such as Gravical, as they often involve much coordination amongst multiple individuals. Having the opportunities to engage in reflections to improve on such processes could provide insights, pre-empt the problems highlighted and allow for recommendations to be made and implemented in a timely fashion.

Socio-emotional skills

Reflections also helped in drawing out the importance of dealing with people and their emotions:

“The last thing would be to always tie up loose ends. Always to remember that we are all humans and that no matter the hierarchy in the organisation, one must be compassionate first towards others and even those under you because you are all working towards the same common goal in the end.”

The quote showed depth of thought and appropriate values on leadership and relationships despite the inevitable task orientation.

Overall, the participants conveyed and demonstrated a mature outlook, even articulating the necessity for a longer-term vision for the event. This is despite the annual office-tenure of the organising committee.

Measures of Success

Congruence of instruments

To our knowledge, it is the first time that the instruments (i.e. P-O-L-C and Bradley's level of reflection frameworks) were used in conjunction for the purpose of measuring co-curricular learning outcomes through reflective practice. Through these, we were able to code 95% of students' reflection statements, and assess students' learning through sport event management.

Depth of students' reflection

Additionally, two markers assessed the 19 reflections individually and according to Bradley's Criteria for Assessing Levels of Reflection (Appendix 5). Nine reflections were assessed at the same level. The markers met face to face and reviewed the 10 which were awarded different levels (Appendix 1). After robust discussion on each piece, the levels were concurred. The final results were 8 (or 42%) reflections at Level One, 8 (or 42%) at Level Two and 3 (or 16%) at Level Three.

The reflections varied in length, from brief pointers to thoughtful and rather coherent narratives. But even in the higher level reflections, there could be deeper articulation and introspection. The guided questions aimed to assist students in their self-analyses were not closely followed.

Since a critique of reflective practice is self-confirmation, especially if reflection is done alone (Yeomans, 2000, p. 74), a focus group discussion was initiated to facilitate students challenging assumptions and values in a safe environment. This exemplifies Argyris' (1977) double-looped learning. Edwards (1999, p. 71) explains "Single-loop learning involves change within the context of existing premises and assumptions. If goals are not met, corrective action can be taken. But the goals and current operating procedures themselves are not questioned. In contrast, double-loop learning requires surfacing fundamental, underlying assumptions and beliefs and then challenging to determine if they are in the service of accomplishing desired goals."

The focus group questions were thus designed to draw out tensions experienced, understand how conflicts were resolved, grasp the interactions within the team and uncover the learning as a result of the process. Six students, all of whom were organising an event of this scale for the first time, participated. The analysis of the focus group discussion generated close to 150 codes which matched very closely to the P-O-L-C framework.

Students' perceptions of usefulness of reflective practice

It was asked during the focus group discussion how helpful the reflection questions were to their learning, 1 being very helpful and 5 as not helpful. The participants rated it between 1-2 or 2-3, with the exception of one participant. On why she thought it was 5 to her on a personal level, she explained that reflection was something she engaged in daily. For the purpose of the event, however, she felt that reflections were helpful, and she rated it 1-2, adding that it helped in understanding what and why the other members were feeling or reacting in certain ways. She explained:

"5 and it is not that the questions were bad. It is how I function. At the end of the day, I will think back on what I have done if not I cannot sleep. In a sense, the reflection is extra rather than something to help me reflect on what I have done. But I think on the whole for Gravical, it is a 1 or 2 as what they said. I only realised about the problems. I was not sure of what was happening in other departments and did not know of the problems. In the sense, during the AAR and as a result of the reflection questions, I found out more that there were such problems and perhaps I could learn from their experience."

From the above, it seemed that it may be advantageous to have platforms for sharing of ideas or engagement in strategising. It may also be helpful to see how individuals who were more attuned to doing reflections as a form of personal management, could be introduced to such practices at the team level.

Recommendations and further research

'Reflection in action' journaling could be considered for the next batch of organising committee members and the data compared with this study as "students can only learn to be reflective practitioners when they are in practice" (Rolfe, 2014, p. 1182).

As the researchers were from the co-curricular units and had no academic links with the students, it would be a stretch to observe or evaluate the integration of theory and practice, an outcome of effective reflective thinking. A faculty member who teaches curriculum closest to event management could be roped in as an assessor of the level of reflective writing, an observer, or as a reflective mentor/facilitator during the event, should group sharing discussions be trialled.

Finally, the data collection could be supplemented and strengthened by asking participants which processes of Roth (1989) were used during their reflection (Appendix 7). This can help confirm the specificity of the type of thinking and the skills required in self-analysis.

Implications for Policy and Sport Management Practice

Implementing reflective practice and encouraging sustainable reflecting in the co-curricular context in higher education may be a challenge as reflecting is not a natural phenomenon as evidenced from the qualitative research. Those with motivation can be effective reflective practitioners as a result while others being asked to reflect may do so perfunctorily or remain at the descriptive level.

Roth (1989, p. 34) was of the view that reflective practice was a continuum with increased ability moving in tandem with academic maturity and collective experiences. He felt that "explaining to students that they need to look beyond practice or behaviour and gain

insights may not suffice. Depending on the level and maturity of the student, training and coaching in reflective observation will be necessary. In fact, preparation for reflective observation and participation should be an integral part of early field experiences.”

While many viewed reflective practice as an individual and personal activity, group or shared reflection, formal or informal, had been studied (Knowles et al., 2001, p. 188) and can be introduced where relevant. From action research, an advantage of facilitated sharing of experiences with others is an exchange of learning in a safe and supportive environment where personal assumptions are uncovered and impact on learning examined. While the advantages of universality, cohesion and hope are cited, the group members and facilitator are dynamics that can influence the individual's level of safety and anxiety due to self-disclosure (Haddock, 1997, p. 382).

Conclusion

In this study, reflective practice was used as a method to guide students reflect on their experiences of organising the event at both the individual and the group levels. Through students' individual written reflections and shared views during the focus group discussion, we gathered evidence of enhanced experiential learning amongst the students, which revealed deeper understanding of personal and team management skills, systems and processes as well as socio-emotional skills. A point of consideration is whether the students should first be taught 'reflective practice' or made to understand 'reflective writing' so that they can better express themselves to reflect significant learning. Given the novel approach of this study, i.e. using P-O-L-C and Bradley's level of reflection frameworks to measure co-curricular learning outcomes through reflective practice, we believe that there is much potential for exploration and in-depth empirical study.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the SMU Climb Team and the 19 committee members for participating in the study.

References

- Anderson, a G., Knowles, Z., & Gilbourne, D. (2004). Reflective practice for sport psychologists: Concepts, models, practical implications, and thoughts on dissemination. *Sport Psychologist*. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.18.2.188>
- Argyris, C. (1977). Double loop learning in organizations. *Harvard Business Review*, 55(5), 115–125. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02013415>
- Bringle, R.G and Hatcher, J. A. (1999). Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience. *Educational Horizons*. Retrieved from <https://www.american.edu/ocl/volunteer/upload/Bringle-Hatcher-Reflection.pdf>
- Cropley, B., Hanton, S., Miles, A., & Niven, A. (2010). Exploring the Relationship Between Effective and Reflective Practice in Applied Sport Psychology. *The Sport Psychologist*, 24, 521–541. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.24.4.521>
- Edwards, A. (1999). Reflective practice in sport management. *Sport Management Review*, 2(1983), 67–81. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(99\)70090-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(99)70090-2)
- Fleming, J., & Martin, A. (2007). Facilitating Reflective Learning Journeys in Sport Co-operative Education. *The Journal of Hospitality Leisure Sport and Tourism*, 6(2), 115–121. <https://doi.org/10.3794/johlste.62.171>

- Haddock, J. (1997). Reflection in groups: contextual and theoretical considerations within nurse education and practice. *Nurse Education Today*, 17(5), 381–5. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0260-6917\(97\)80099-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0260-6917(97)80099-8)
- Knowles, Z., Tyler, G., Gilbourne, D., & Eubank, M. (2006). Reflecting on reflection: exploring the practice of sports coaching graduates. *Reflective Practice*, 7(2), 163–179. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940600688423>
- Knowles, Z., Gilbourne, D., Borrie, A., & Nevill, A. (2001). Developing the Reflective Sports Coach: A study exploring the processes of reflective practice within a higher education coaching programme. *Reflective Practice*, 2(2), 185–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623940123820>
- Kolb, David, A. (1976). Management and the learning process. *California Management Review*, 18(3), Spring, 21–31.
- Krueger RA & Casey MA (2000) *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research*, 3rd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Principles of Management*. (2015). University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing edition. Retrieved from <http://open.lib.umn.edu/principlesmanagement/chapter/1-5-planning-organizing-leading-and-controlling-2/> on 1 Feb 2018.
- Reflection in service-learning classes*. (2011). Retrieved December 4, 2017, from <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html>
- Rich, M. (2010). Embedding reflective practice in undergraduate business and management dissertations. *International Journal of Management Education (Oxford Brookes University)*, 9(1), 57–66. <https://doi.org/10.3794/ijme.91.216>
- Rolfe, G. (2014). Rethinking reflective education: What would Dewey have done? *Nurse Education Today*, 34(8), 1179–1183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2014.03.006>
- Roth, R. A. (1989). Preparing the Reflective Practitioner: Transforming the Apprentice through the Dialectic. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(2), 31–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002248718904000206>
- Yang, J., Schneller, C., & Roche, S. (Eds.) (2015). *The Role of Higher Education in Promoting Lifelong Learning*. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Hamburg.
- Yeomans, L. (2000). Does reflective practice have relevance for innovation in public relations? *Journal of Communication Management*, 5(1), 72–81. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13632540110806686>
- Zakus, D. H., Malloy, D. C., & Edwards, A. (2007). Critical and Ethical Thinking in Sport Management: Philosophical Rationales and Examples of Methods. *Sport Management Review*, 10(2), 133–158. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(07\)70008-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(07)70008-6)

Appendices

Appendix 1

S/N	Name	Designation in EXCO	Marker E	Marker A	Remarks
1	WG	President	3	3	3-same
2	VC	Logistics Director	2	2	2-same
3	NPJ	Registration	2	1/2	2-agreed
4	NJX	Wall Building & Logistics Director	1	1	1-same
5	BM	Operations Director	3	1/2	2-agreed
6	SC	Sponsorship Director	1	1/2	1-agreed
7	ML	VP (Logistics & Operations)	3	2	3-agreed
8	LWX	Sponsorship Director	2	1	1-agreed
9	LYZ	Human Resource Director (Manpower)	2	1	1-agreed
10	KBH	Programmes Director	2	2	2-same
11	GN	Marketing Director	2	2	2-same
12	CF	Registration Department	2	2	2-same
13	BS	Marketing Director	1	1	1-same
14	AC	Sponsorship Director	2	1	1-agreed
15	ACJY	Vice President (Administration)	2	3	3-agreed
16	VJQ	Finance Director	2	2	2-same
17	AT	Sponsorship Director	1	1/2	1-agreed
18	Z	Logistics Director	1	1	1-same
19	CZH	Human Resource Director	2	2	2-same

Appendix 2

REFLECTION REPORT (POST)

Reflect critically about your Event Organising experience. Pen your thoughts using the following framework as a guide:

- 1. What?** (Report the facts and events of an experience objectively.)
e.g. What stands out in your experience in organising the event? What did you observe about the organising process? What issues were being addressed, if any?
- 2. So what?** (Analyse the experience.)
e.g. How is the experience different from what you expected? What lens are you viewing from? How does the project address the needs/issues in the Club/SMU Community?
- 3. Now what?** (Consider the future impact of the experience on you and your Club.)
e.g. What learning occurred for you in this experience? How can you apply the learning? What follow up is needed to address the challenges or difficulties? What information can you share with your peers and incoming Organising Committee? If you could do the project again, what would you do differently?

Source: University of Minnesota. (2017, 5 Dec). *Reflection in Service-Learning Classes*. Retrieved on 4 Dec 2017 from <http://www.servicelearning.umn.edu/info/reflection.html>

Appendix 3

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) Questions (post-event)

Before we start: things to go through with students

- Purpose of FGD - to understand the planning process, challenges, ways of overcoming the challenges and hiccups of the event, recommendations for next committee
- Consent and Recording

Semi-Structured Questions

Quick round of introductions (name, school, year of study, role in the event)

Probing questions

- 1) Can you tell us your personal reason/s for your involvement in this event? (MOTIVATION / PERSONAL GOAL);
- 2) Do you think that the event turned out as you imagined it to be? Why?

FGD questions

Planning:

Determining Goals (SHARED GOALS)

- 3) Let's start from the beginning. Can you describe how as a group, you come to a consensus about the goals/outcomes/successes of the event? [MISSION/VISION]

Organising:

- 4) During the event itself, were there unexpected issues that occurred?
- 5) What was the most challenging issue you had to resolve in your role?
- 6) How did you resolve them?
- 7) In doing so, what do you think were the lessons learned?
- 8) What processes, whether communications, organisation design, logistics, etc., would you recommend putting in place for the next committee?

Working Relationships (TEAM & Stakeholders):

Stakeholders:

- 9) How did you determine the stakeholders that you needed to reach out to?
- 10) How did you reach out to them? What were their views?

Team:

- 11) How would you describe the working relationships within the team?
- 12) Were there times when you met with issues that you could not resolve on your own/within your team? What did you do to remedy the situation? [DECISION MAKING]
- 13) Were there things that the general consensus was high? [STRATEGISING]
- 14) Were there things that you disagreed upon? How did you negotiate this? [MANAGING CONFLICTS]

Self:

- 15) What lessons did you learned about yourself in this event?

Concluding Statements:

- 16) If you could do this again, what might you have done differently?
- 17) On the guided reflection questions: on a scale of 1-5, 1 being the most helpful, and 5 being the least helpful, how did the reflection questions aid you in thinking about the event and its outcomes? Can you explain why?

Appendix 4

Code Book - Table of categories, codes and descriptions for data from SMU Gravigal 2018, 11-14 Jan 2018, Campus Green (v3)

Category	Code	Description
Planning		Strategic planning involves PESTEL & SWOT analyses to position the organisation to compete effectively in the environment.
	Vision and Mission (Red)	A vision states the desired future position of the organisation. A mission identifies the organisation's business, its objectives and how to reach those objectives.
	Strategising (Lime)	An organization's top management conducts strategic planning. Strategic planning has a long timeframe, three years or more. It includes the entire organization and formulation of objectives based on the mission that is the fundamental reason for existence.
	Goals and Objectives (Gray)	Planners establish objectives of what to achieve and when. They identify alternatives for achieving objectives and make decisions about the best courses of action. They formulate steps and ensure implementation. Finally, they evaluate the success of their plans and take corrective action when necessary.
Organising		Organising involves developing an organisational structure and allocating human resources to ensure the achievement of objectives.
	Organisational Design (Blue)	Decisions made about the structure of an organisation are termed organisational design decisions. The structure is represented by an organisation chart which shows chain of command and is the framework that coordinates effort.
	Culture (Fuchsia)	The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.
	Social Networks (Silver)	A network of friends, peers, and other personal contacts. An online community with a common interest who use a website or other technologies to communicate and share information and resources.
Leading		Leading involves inspiring others to act through social and informal sources of influence. If managers exhibit effective leadership, their subordinates will be motivated to attain organisational objectives.
	Leadership (Black)	To become effective at leading, managers must first understand their subordinates' personalities, values, attitudes, and emotions. Different leadership styles and characteristics of leaders impact the performance and motivation of subordinates.

	Decision Making (Maroon)	<p>The act or process of making choices or decisions with a group of people.</p> <p>A decision can be defined as a course of action purposely chosen from a set of alternatives to achieve organizational or managerial objectives or goals.</p> <p>Decision making process is continuous and indispensable component of managing any organization or business activities. Decisions are made to sustain the activities of all business activities and organizational functioning.</p>
	Communications (Green)	<p>Communication is a means of sending messages and instructions. It is the dissemination or exchange of thoughts, opinions or information by speech, prose, signs or symbols.</p>
	Groups and Teams (Olive)	<p>Groups have a strong leadership and individual accountability. They focus on the organisation's mission. Teams share leadership roles and individual and mutual accountability. They focus on specific goals and productivity is due to collective team efforts.</p>
	Motivation (Navy)	<p>Motivation is about the ways in which people can be energised to put in effort and productivity. It can be intrinsic or extrinsic.</p>
Controlling		<p>Controlling involves ensuring that performance or results do not deviate much from standards.</p>
	Systems and Processes (Purple)	<p>Controlling includes a) establishing performance standards b) comparing actual performance against standards & c) taking corrective action when needed.</p> <p>Performance standards can be stated in revenue, costs, profits, units produced, number of defects, quality level or customer satisfaction.</p>
	Strategic Human Resources (Teal)	<p>Strategic HR involves taking action to ensure that the work of subordinates contributes toward the achievement of organizational and departmental objectives.</p>

Source: Adapted from <http://open.lib.umn.edu/principlesmanagement/chapter/1-5-planning-organizing-leading-and-controlling-2/> retrieved on 1 Feb 18

Appendix 5

Table 2
Bradley's Criteria for Assessing Levels of Reflection

Level One

1. Gives examples of observed behaviors or characteristics of the client or setting, but provides no insight into reasons behind the observation; observations tend to become dimensional and conventional or unassimilated repetitions of what has been heard in class or from peers.
2. Tends to focus on just one aspect of the situation.
3. Uses unsupported personal beliefs as frequently as "hard" evidence.
4. May acknowledge differences of perspective but does not discriminate effectively among them.

Level Two

1. Observations are fairly thorough and nuanced although they tend not to be placed in a broader context.
2. Provides a cogent critique from one perspective, but fails to see the broader system in which the aspect is embedded and other factors that may make change difficult.
3. Uses both unsupported personal belief and evidence but is beginning to be able to differentiate between them.
4. Perceives legitimate differences of viewpoint.
5. Demonstrates a beginning ability to interpret evidence.

Level Three

1. Views things from multiple perspectives; able to observe multiple aspects of the situation and place them in context.
2. Perceives conflicting goals within and among the individuals involved in a situation and recognizes that the differences can be evaluated.
3. Recognizes that actions must be situationally dependent and understands many of the factors that affect their choice.
4. Makes appropriate judgments based on reasoning and evidence.
5. Has a reasonable assessment of the importance of the decisions facing clients and of his or her responsibility as a part of the clients' lives.

Source: Bringle, Robert, G. and Hatcher, Julie, A. (1999, Summer). Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience. *Educational Horizons*, 179 -185. Retrieved 4 Dec 2017 from <https://www.american.edu/oc/volunteer/upload/Bringle-Hatcher-Reflection.pdf>

Appendix 6

Sample of Coding Discussion

Level 2 Sample (VJQ)	<p>2.1 Throughout the process of organising SMU Gravigal, the most prominent issue would be the lack of communication between the upper management and the rest of the organising committees. 2.2 The upper management would often resolve issues within themselves rather than pumping it downwards. 2.3 This let the rest of the organising committees find that they often don't not know what is the progress of the planning and what is needed to be done. 2.4 However, this situation was alleviated when I conveyed the comments and opinions of the organising committees to the upper management.</p>	<p>2.1 -2.3 'Communication' was the consensus. 2.4 'Communication' was agreed after discussion on 'Decision making' and 'Action taken' (sub-code). It was arrived after all coders concurred that the key role of the respondent was to transmit information.</p>
	<p>2.5 I have been in the finance position of various events but SMU Gravigal have been my biggest. 2.6 With over 800 participants, the amount of finances that is pooled into the event is immense. 2.7 With more finances, accountability would be of upmost importance. 2.8 SMU Gravigal also allows succeeding executive members of SMU Climb Team have an opportunity to organise one of the biggest climbing competition in Singapore. 2.9 This gives them an invaluable experience that is vastly different from the job scope of an executive member.</p>	<p>2.5 - 2.9 one coded 'Organisation design'; 2.5 -2.6 another coded 'Systems & processes'; 2.8 'Strategising'; & 2.9 'Strategic HR'; & 2.5-2.7 a third coder applied 'Strategic HR'; 2.8 'Strategies'. As accountability of finances was a main point, 'Strategic HR' was agreed for 2.5 - 2.7; & 'Strategising' from 2.8 - 2.9.</p>

Appendix 7

Roth's Processes of a Reflective Practitioner

According to Roth (1989), the processes of a reflective practitioner are:

1. Question what, why and how one does things; ask what, why and how others do things
2. Emphasise inquiry as a tool of learning
3. Suspend judgement, wait for sufficient data or self-validate
4. Seek alternatives
5. Keep on open mind
6. Compare and contrast
7. Seek the framework, theoretical basis, underlying rationale (of behaviours, methods, techniques, programmes)
8. View from various perspectives
9. Identify and test assumptions (theirs and others), seek conflicting evidence
10. Put into different/varied contexts
11. Ask "what if ...?"
12. Ask for others' ideas and viewpoints
13. Adapt and adjust to instability and change
14. Function within uncertainty, complexity and variety
15. Hypothesise
16. Consider consequences
17. Validate what is given or believed
18. Synthesise and test
19. Seek, identify and resolve problems ("problem setting", "problem solving")
20. Initiate after thinking through (alternatives, consequences) or putting into context
21. Analyse – what makes it work; in what context would it not?
22. Evaluate – what worked, what didn't and why?
23. Use prescriptive models (behavioural models, protocols) only when adapted to the situation
24. Make decisions in practice of the profession (knowledge created in use)

Copyright © 2018 T.Straughan, Tay, Song, & Koh-Tan. The authors assign to HERDSA and educational non-profit institutions a non-exclusive license to use this document for personal use and in courses of instruction provided that the article is used in full and this copyright statement is reproduced. The authors also grant a non-exclusive license to HERDSA to publish this document in full on the World Wide Web (prime site and mirrors) and within the portable electronic format HERDSA 2018 conference proceedings. Any other usage is prohibited without the express permission of the authors.